Call for National Consensus on Subsidy

*199. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:
SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Economists have given a call for a national consensus on subsidies;

(b) if so, the details of their suggestions; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) Finance Minister met a group of Economists on January 12, 1999 as a part of his pre-Budget discussions. In the meeting, the Economists made a number of suggestions which inter-alia included the following: emphasis on expenditure control and quality of fiscal deficit; cap on government debt; professionalisation of Public Sector Enterprise management; strategic disinvestment to raise resources for retiring government debt and financing social sector; liberalisation in the agricultural sector to reap full benefits of reforms; step up investment in the agricultural sector; promote housing sector to generate more income and employment; encourage export growth; take measures to mobilise non-resident Indians (NRI) savings to take care of likely flucutations/decline in the flow from Foreign Institutional Investors; remove customs surcharge and reduce spread and average rate of import duties etc.

(c) Suggestions made by professionals and associations are kept in view while formulating appropriate policies by the Government.

Programmes of Doordarshan and Air

*200. SHRI ONKAR SINGH LAKHAWAT: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme regarding telecasting and broadcasting of programmes relating to patriotism, character building, social harmony and didacticism oriented through Doordarshan and All India Radio;

(b) whether Government propose to put a ban on the showing of women in Doordarshan advertisements as a consumer commodity; and

(c) whether Government propose to check the cultural pollution being spread by the private channels?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) Such programmes are regularly carried by Doordarshan and All India Radio.

(b) The advertising code of Prasar Bharati does not permit such projection of women and as such, the question of a ban by the Government does not arise.

(c) Amendments to the Cable TV Networks (Regulations) Act are being considered to make the programme and advertising codes uniformaly applicable to all private satellite channels, which are normally received through cable operators.

WRITEEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Losses suffered by Indian Airlines

1396. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Airlines earned a profit of crores of rupees during last year and has suffered a

loss of almost the equal amount of profit within the first six months of the current financial year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for sudden fall in its profits; and

(d) what measures have been taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) Indian Airlines has made a net loss of Rs. 34.90 crores during the first half of the current financial year 1998-99 as against a loss of over Rs. 22 crores for the same period during the year 1997-98. The performance of the current financial year is in consonance with the past trend. Traffic in the aviation industry is subject to low and peak seasons. The first six months are considered low season when usually traffic is low and losses are incurred. These losses are generally made good by the high traffic and earnings made in the following six months i.e. October to March, which are considered to be a peak season of festivals and winter months.

(d) The Company is making continuous and vigorous efforts to bring economy in expenditure and improve its productivity to the maximum extent possible.

Synergisation of Operations of AI and IA

1397. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) it is a fact that Government plans a progressive synergising of AI and IA;

(b) whether the aim of this synergisation is to reduce the operating costs and compliment each other; and

(c) what are the broad details of the plan and when will it be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIAITON (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. With a view to optimise utilisation of the resources and to improve operational and financial efficiency the Government has issued a directive in December, 1998, advising both the airlines to (i) Rationalise schedules; (ii) Establish common rated fares; (iii) Expand code share arrangements; (iv) Maintain common offices/GSAs as far as possible; (v) Explore the possibilities of leasing in and leasing out of capacity to/from each other at the going market rates; (vi) Undertake joint advetisement promotion, marketing activities'; and (vii) Coordinate ground handling of flights and related activities.

Synergy process in the above mentioned areas is continuing.

Air Services to Purnia

1398. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps to introduce Flights from Purnia to other parts of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services taking into account the need for air transport services of different regions of the country. It is, however, up to the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability subject to compliance of route dispersal guidelines issued by Government.